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SUBJECT: CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE REINFORCES THEMES
OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND FOOD SECURITY

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a two-day visit to Abuja, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee met with Nigerian Government (GON) officials and non-governmental organizations to reinforce USG themes on good governance and food security. Noting her long-standing support of Nigeria, she encouraged GON officials to provide conditions allowing their citizens to meet their full potential. END SUMMARY.

REINFORCING THEMES ON GOOD GOVERNANCE

¶2. (SBU) U.S. Congresswoman Jackson Lee reinforced USG themes on good governance, transparency, corruption, and food security. She repeatedly expressed her friendship with the Nigerian people, noting that she had strongly advocated among Congressional colleagues for debt relief for Nigeria in the 1990s. She praised Nigerian participation and leadership in peacekeeping missions in Africa and efforts against trafficking in persons. The Representative emphasized U.S. desire to help the GON function more effectively on behalf of its citizens.

GON AWARE OF SHORTCOMINGS

¶3. (SBU) Nigerian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Bagudu Mutley Hirse welcomed Congresswoman Jackson Lee's visit at a "crucial time" for Nigeria, which he said remained a "young" democracy. Lauding President Yar'Adua's seven-point agenda, Hirse encouraged greater foreign investment in the key sectors of solid minerals and power generation. Foreign Ministry (MFA) Permanent Secretary Joe Keshi, recalling efforts to promote U.S. investment in Nigeria during his four-year tenure at Nigeria's consulate in Atlanta, expressed frustration that U.S. businesses did not seem interested in Nigeria, either because of distance between the two nations or ignorance of opportunities. The Representative suggested establishing a single point of contact for U.S. small businesses. Insisting that "Nigeria

is a country that the United States can do business with," Keshi suggested approaching Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) Executive Secretary Mustafa Bello.

¶4. (C) Keshi said his government recognized its own "shortcomings" as well as many opportunities for reform after years of military rule and the resulting negative fall-out on institutions. Acknowledging U.S. disenchantment with performance of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), he advocated institution building for the EFCC and other anti-corruption entities in place of isolating the current director. Characterizing Niger Delta amnesty as "working reasonably well," he expressed concern over the flow of arms to militants who used proceeds from the sale of bunkered oil to buy weapons from sources outside Nigeria. The GON, Keshi insisted, needed help in tracing serial numbers, to which the Charge reminded Keshi of the standing U.S. offer to trace serial numbers of confiscated weapons.

CREATE "COMMUNAL TRUST FUNDS"

¶5. (SBU) Oronto Douglas, Senior Special Assistant to the Vice President on Research, Documentation, and Strategy for the Niger Delta and founder of the Environmental Action Group, recounted his experiences in promoting social justice and equitable distribution of resources in the Niger Delta. He expressed concern that Delta youth, who have grown up with violence, would not know other ways of effecting change. Noting his advocacy of non-violent protests, he criticized

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the violent tactics of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other militants, insisting that stakeholders must ultimately enter into peaceful dialogue to resolve issues. By his calculations, the violence has produced 20,000 deaths and displaced 80,000 persons since ¶1966.

¶6. (SBU) Declaring that "Nigeria depends on the Delta for survival," Douglas said communities urgently needed resources for health, schools, shelter, and roads. He advocated establishment of "communal trust funds" from a portion (five percent) of profits currently going to the GON and oil companies to address underlying conditions contributing to frustration and violence in Delta. Congressional oversight, which he described as non-existent in Nigeria, would be critical to proper accountability and distribution of funds. By transforming communities into genuine "stakeholders" in the Delta, authorities could undercut the ability of militants to foment violence. Douglas also suggested review of property laws in Nigeria, lamenting loss of community property rights by Niger Delta inhabitants through military decree decades earlier. He characterized such action as a violation of local citizen rights under the Constitution which established Nigeria's federal system.

ELIMINATE "GUNS IN THE CREEKS"

¶7. (SBU) Clinton Foundation Nigeria Director Dr. Owens Wiwa (brother of late Ogoni writer and leader Ken Saro Wiwa, executed in 1995 during the General Abacha regime) decried the widespread availability of weapons in the Niger Delta. Such weaponry, he said, had shifted power from unarmed community leaders to militants with guns. Money to purchase most weapons, he said, came from proceeds of illegal sales of bunkered oil. He encouraged the international community to help improve GON ability to patrol maritime waters and thwart the use of barges to transport pilfered oil to ships off shore. He lamented, however, that corruption in the military, including collusion, has hindered such operations. Eliminating "guns in the creeks," Wiwa declared, will "empower" community leaders.

18. (SBU) Citing the prohibitively high cost of developing infrastructure in the Delta, Wiwa advocated creation of more states there as the quickest way to foster development. Creation of two or three new states, he insisted, would help the Delta's 36 million inhabitants gain a greater share of GON revenue. He averred that, with greater stability in the Delta, oil production will increase, generating even more revenue. Authorities, he predicted, will wait until after the 2011 elections before creating new states.

CUSTOMS COMPTROLLER GENERAL SEEKS MORE HELP

19. (SBU) Nigerian Customs Comptroller General Abdullahi Dikko Inde, newly sworn in to his office, expressed appreciation for U.S. help (provided with funding from the Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau) in arranging a visit by Customs officials to U.S. ports, including Houston and Miami. Embassy International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Officer informed Dikko of a planned October visit by a U.S. inter-agency team to assess operations at land borders and seaports. The Comptroller confirmed ongoing efforts to increase Customs manpower by 5,000 from the current level of 12,000 personnel. He noted progress in reducing the amount of heroin transiting Nigerian ports. Lamenting unreliable scanners at seaports, Dikko requested U.S. help in securing scanners with suitable imaging analysis software.

ECOWAS BUILDING PEACEKEEPING ABILITIES

110. (SBU) ECOWAS Defense and Peacekeeping Director,
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Senegalese Colonel Adama Mbaye, briefed Congresswoman Jackson Lee on the organization's history, role, and mission, as well as efforts to establish a standby force that will cooperate with the African Union. Mbaye noted a European Union pledge from its Peace Stability Fund of one billion dollars over several years to support ECOWAS development. Separately, the Congresswoman met with U.S. military personnel and contractors who had just installed sophisticated communications equipment for ECOWAS peacekeeping operations. As part of an international initiative, ECOWAS developed specifications, the U.S. State Department provided funding, and the U.S. military implemented the project.

PROVIDING MEDICINES TO HIV/AIDS PATIENTS

111. (U) Representative Jackson Lee interacted with staff and patients at Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Hospital in Gwagwalada on the outskirts of Abuja, learning about the hospital's provision of anti-viral treatment to over 1,200 HIV/AIDS patients. The program, with support from USAID and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), also provides treatment and counseling to expectant parents. Such efforts have prevented mother-to-child transmission of the disease in all cases where the expectant mother took the prescribed medicines 24 hours before delivery. In a town-hall setting, patients enthusiastically encouraged continued U.S. support.

FOOD SECURITY VITAL TO NIGERIA

112. (U) The Congresswoman's visit to the Kubwa Demonstration Farm at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture showcased USAID support for development and cultivation of high-yielding, disease-resistant cassava varieties as part of

a 25 million dollar Global Food Security Response Program. USAID has helped over 700,000 farmers, mostly women, to expand marketing opportunities through the Maximizing Agricultural Revenue and Key Enterprises in Target Sites (MARKETS) Program. Farmers expressed keen appreciation for such help to the visiting Representative.

COMMENT

¶13. (SBU) Congresswoman Jackson Lee's remarks on good governance and food security received extensive media coverage and usefully dovetailed with themes addressed during the Secretary's recent visit to Abuja. END COMMENT.

¶14. (U) Congresswoman Jackson Lee departed Abuja before the drafting of this telegram.

MCCULLOUGH